RAJYA SABHA

*Tuesday, the 16th March, 1993/25 Phalguna, 1914 (Saka)*

*The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.*

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Provision of Telephone services at cheaper rates in rural areas**

231. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) what measures have been taken or are proposed to be taken by Government to make telephone service available at cheaper rates in the rural areas of the country;

(b) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to reduce the annual rental and call charges for rural based telephones; and

(c) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) The rates of the telephone service available in the rural areas are cheaper than that in the urban areas. The rental and registration amount for smaller exchanges found in rural areas are less than that for larger exchanges found in urban areas. It has been decided to provide telephone facilities to all Gram Panchayats without the condition of minimum revenue, on loss basis.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The telephone service in rural areas is already highly subsidised in view of high cost of provision of telephone service in rural areas and low calling rate.

SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Sir, the honourable Minister has said that the telephone charges are cheaper in rural areas. But it is not comparable to the phone services given to the rural people. The telecom service is poor in the rural areas. Trunk call service is the main service in the rural areas, but rarely do the trunk calls come through and the cost is very high in the rural areas. One can see this when one looks at the quality of the telephone services provided in the rural areas. That is why I have requested for lower rental and call charges.

Sir, there is a wide gap between the investment in telecom services in the urban areas and in the rural areas. More than three-fourths of the population is in the rural areas and the rest an urban areas. The Government must take steps to improve the telecom service in rural areas and give more facilities. Sir about six years back, trunk calls booked from the rural areas could be made at concessional rates from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. This was a useful concession. But this has been removed now. I would like to know whether the Government will restore the facilities at cheaper rates for runk calls made between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. and also on Sundays and national holidays. I would also like to know whether the Government would allow trunk calls from the rural areas to be made at 25 per cent of the cost.

SHRI SUKH RAM: Sir, as I have already stated in reply to the main question, rates for the rural areas are cheaper than for the urban areas. As you will find, Sir, for 100 lines and above, for 24-hour service, the charges are Rs. 900/- and bi-monthly only Rs. 150/- and for less than 100 lines Rs. 750/- and bi-monthly Rs. 125 and in the case of exchanges providing service for a restricted number of hours, the annual charge is Rs. 600/- and bi-monthly Rs. 100/- and if the trunk call is booked from the rural public telephone, then 50 per cent concession is given even on the trunk as well as other calls also. This is being given.

As far as the expenditure is concerned, in the Eighth Plan, our projection is about Rs. 40,550 crores and the physical targets are 75 lakh lines to be installed. And out of that, though the Planning Commission has

cleared only Rs. 25,000 crores—I hope the hon. Finance Minister will help me in this matter for raising the amount because we are not depending on the Budgetary support—I think, those additional Rs. 15,000 crores will be forthcoming with the assistance of the hon. Finance Minister so that we will be in a position to install those 75 lakh lines. And out of Rs. 40,550 crores, we are spending about Rs. 8,000 crores in expanding this telephone network in the rural areas. And I agree with the hon. Member that in certain cases, qualitatively the performance may not be good in certain rural areas. But we are trying our best to improve the quality also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Sir, the Government is concentrating on the improvement of the telecom facilities only in the urban areas. Will the Government increase its attention and investment in rural areas in the Eighth Plan period by giving STD facilities and installing more modern exchanges in the rural areas?

Secondly, what is the allotment in 1993-94 for rural areas and urban areas for new telecom facilities? Will the Government increase the investment in rural areas in the coming financial year?

SHRI SUKH RAM: Sir, as I have already said, Rs. 8,000 crores are to be spent in the rural area and this amount will be sufficient to meet the requirement of rural area because in the Eighth Plan, our projection is that telephones in the rural area as well as in the tribal area will be on demand. So, the moment the demand increases in the rural areas, we will be in a position to spend more money on that. And as far as the funds are concerned for the year 1993-94, about Rs. 1100 crores will be spent in the rural areas and Rs. 4,779 crores will be spent in the urban areas.

**श्री सैयद सिब्ते रजी :** सर, शहरों के ऊपर बहुत ज्यादा दबाव है और कहीं - कहीं तो दस-दस साल तक लोगों को टेलीफोन के लिये इन्तजार करना पड़ता है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि देही इलाकों में, जो देहाती इलाके हैं, उनमें वेटिंग लिस्ट की क्या पोजीशन है? यदि एक आदमी आज टेलीफोन लेने के लिये सप्लाई करता है तो उसको कितने समय के अन्दर आप टेलीफोन उपलब्ध करा देते हैं? दूसरा, मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि किस स्तर तक आप गांवों में पहुंच चुके हैं? यह तो सही है कि आप पहले ग्राम पंचायत स्तर तक पहुंचने जा रहे हैं, लेकिन इसके अलावा कौन सा स्तर है, जहां तक आप पहुंच चुके हैं और वहां पर आपको जो लास वाली बात कह रहे हैं, वह नहीं हो रही है, इसलिये कि एस० टी० डी० फैसिलिटी आप ग्राम स्तर के ऊपर देने जा रहे हैं?

شری سید سبط رضی: سر، شہروں کے اوپر بہت زیادہ دباؤ ہے اور کہیں کہیں تو دس دس سال تک لوگوں کو ٹیلیفون کے لیے انتظار کرنا پڑتا ہے میں مانیہ منتری جی سے یہ جاننا چاہوں گا کہ دیہی علاقوں میں جو دیہاتی علاقے ہیں ان میں ووٹنگ لسٹ کی کیا پوزیشن ہے۔ یدی ایک آدمی آج ٹیلیفون لینے کے لیے اپلائی کرتا ہے تو اس کو کتنے سمے کے اندر آپ ٹیلیفون اپلبدھ کرا دیتے ہیں۔ دوسرا میں جاننا چاہتا ہوں کہ کس استر تک آپ گاؤں کو پہنچ چکے ہیں۔ یہ تو صحیح ہے کہ آپ پہلے گرام پنچایت استر تک پہنچے جا رہے ہیں لیکن اس کے علاوہ کون سا استر ہے جہاں تک پہنچ چکے ہیں اور وہاں پر آپ کو جو لاس والی بات کہہ رہے ہیں وہ نہیں ہو رہی ہے۔ اس سے کہ ایس۔ ٹی۔ ڈی۔ فیسیلٹی آپ گرام استر کے اوپر دیے جا رہے ہیں۔

**श्री सुख राम** : चेयरमैन महोदय, जैसे पहले ही हमने इस बात को बाजे किया है हमारी यह नीति है कि 1995 तक हम सभी ग्राम पंचायतों को टेलीफोन की सुविधाएं प्रदान करेंगे और इसमें 2 लाख 32 हजार 54 सारी ग्राम पंचायतें देश में हैं और उनमें से अभी 90 हजार ग्राम पंचायतों को टेलीफोन हम दे चुके हैं। अगले वर्ष करीबन 57 हजार ग्राम पंचायतों को टेलीफोन हम उपलब्ध करेंगे और उसके बाद करीब 73 हजार या जितनी जो बाकी रहती हैं, 1995 तक हम उसको पूरा करेंगे। इसमें जहां तक वेटिंग लिस्ट का आपने जिक्र किया है, हालांकि प्रश्न तो गांवों में ताल्लुक रखता है, मगर मैं माननीय सदस्य की सूचना के लिये बता दूं, शहरों में चूंकि इसका प्रैशर ज्यादा है और करीबन 30 लाख लोग अभी वैटिंग लिस्ट में हैं और इस वास्ते अभी हमारी जो 8वीं पंच वर्षीय योजना का जहां तक ताल्लुक है, मैंने जैसे कहा कि 75 लाख न्यू लाईंस हम देंगे और उससे ज्यादा जो वैटिंग पीरियड है, शहरों में वह दो साल तक हम उसको ला सकेंगे। मगर जहां तक गांवों का ताल्लुक है, उसको डिमांड के ऊपर हम टेलीफोन उपलब्ध कर सकेंगे, यह हमारी योजना है।

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: Sir, is there a proposal or a recommendation from the Secretaries' Committee or from the Department of Electronics to consider decentralisation of power of the Government of India by giving permission to set up telephone exchanges? I believe there was a recommendation from the Department of Electronics that the State Governments may be given the powers so that the State Governments in Collaboratin with the private sector can set up such local exchanges for industrial estates and rural areas. I would like to know from the Minister his response to such a suggestion which has come from the Department of Electronics.

SHRI SUKH RAM: I am not aware of any such recommendation. I will find out if there is any and I will convey it to the hon. Member.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: It had been widely published in the press.

SHRI SUKH RAM: The hon. Member asked about giving authority to the State Government.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN: It has been widely published in the press.

SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Sir, ours is a vast country. To make telephone services available in the rural areas is a difficult but necessary task. In the developed countries, quite a lot of development are taking place. In order to cater to the needs of the people and in order to keep in pace with the developments that are taking place in the developed countries and also to make telephone service available at cheaper rates, the main research and development institutions like the C-Dot, Telematics Engineering Centre and Telematics Research Centre have to be further strengthened. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he agrees with this and if so, what all steps the Government intends to take.

SHRI SUKH RAM: I agree with the hon. Member that there has to be more stress on research in this field. I cannot, at this stage, give you the exact amount that we are spending on research but I wish that more and more money could be made available for this research because lots of technological changes are taking place in the world and if we do not keep pace with other nations, we will be lagging behind. The telecom facility is most essential in order to improve our economic activities and particularly in trading because we have to link ourselves with the entire world. This has been our endeavour but as I said, it depends upon the availability of the resources. C-Dot has done a tremendous amount of work during these years. They have even produced the switching system up to ten thousand

lines and they are trying to improve upon it still further. I hope in course of time they will be able to make further progress.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Sir, communications is the heart of all development and progress, and progress in rural areas is the most important and most urgent. But unfortunately, these areas are neglected so far as telecommunications are concerned. Let us forget about the cheaper rates. Even at the usual and normal rates, they do not get even the ordinary priority. Rather they do not get any priority at all along with others. To give you an instance, people who live in palatial houses called farm houses, have the telephones but the real villagers who are hardly one hundred yards away do not get any telephone because the explanation given is that there is no pole in that village. How do you expect a pole in that village? Over the last two years I have been clamouring for one telephone in a village called "Pochanpur" which is a part of Delhi. Because it is out of my quota and it is for a villager, that has been sanctioned, but it has not been installed because there is no pole. My I request the hon. Minister —I have great faith in him—urgently to look into it and see that telephones are installed in all the villages in Delhi at least.

**श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर** : श्रीमन्, गांव की बात है, यहां तो दिल्ली में ही जो कोटे से सेंक्शन हो गया, उसको नहीं दे रहे हैं। एक साल पहले मेरे कोटे से जो सेंक्शन हो गये वे टेलीफोन भी नहीं लगे, दिल्ली में और यू०पी० में। एक साल पहले सेंक्शन हो गया, लास्ट ईयर कोटे से सेंक्शन किया है और आज तक लगा नहीं है। . . . . (**व्यवधान**) . . . .

**एक माननीय सदस्य** : यह गांव की बात है, शहर की नहीं है। . . . .

**श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर** : साहब, शहर में ही नहीं हो रहा। . . . (**व्यवधान**) . . .

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: But this is my experience.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please.

SHRI SUKH RAM: Sir, I would definitely look into the complaints of the hon. Members. If telephones have been sanctioned and have not been installed... (*Interruptions*) I assure the hon. Members that sanctioned... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister answer.

SHRI SUKH RAM: The sanctioned telephones will be installed, I assure the hon. Members.

As far as the rural area is concerned not only are we covering all the panchayats but we intend to provide this facility to all the villages, which are 5,78,000 in number, the country. They will all be provided with telephone facility by 2000 AD. Hon. Prime Minister has issued instructions that it should be done early. So, it all depends on the hon. Finance Minister. If he makes avaiable sufficient funds, we will not be lagging behind. We have got a projection in the Eighth Five-Year Plan that all the exchanges, not only in cities, in urban areas, but in rural areas also, will be provided the NSD and the ISD facilities so that our rural areas are also in the mainstream of the nation in the communication field.

**श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह** : सभापति जी, मंत्री महोदय ने अपने उत्तर में यह कहा है कि आपने 90 हजार ग्रामीण-क्षेत्रों या ग्राम-पंचायतों में अब तक टेलीफोन कनेक्शन दिया है, जबकि सरकार की ओर से जो कागज आया है, जनवरी का यह प्रकाशन है इसमें लिखा है, कि आपने 21,752 ग्राम पंचायतों को ही

दूर - संचार सेवायें उपलब्ध कराई हैं। हो सकता है कि पिछले एक-डेढ़ महीने के अन्दर 21 हजार से 90 हजार आप चले गये हों, जैसा कि आपने स्वयं अपने जवाब में कहा है। मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूं कि आप इसमें भी लिख रहे हैं कि 1995 तक और सभी ग्राम-पंचायतों में दूर-संचार सेवा उपलब्ध करा देंगे, मैं इसको ध्यान में रखते हुए आपसे यह कहना चाहता हूं कि मेरे पत्र के उत्तर में बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्र देव, जिला औरंगाबाद में आज से छह महीने पहले मुझको पत्र दिया और उस समय लिखा कि वहां एक्सचेंज आपने स्वीकार कर दिया है। यह अभी तक वहां एक्सचेंज चालू नहीं हुआ है। इसका कारण यह है कि आपके बड़े अधिकारी वहां जो गांवों में बड़े पूंजीपति हैं या व्यावसायिक हैं, उनके घरों में से किस के यहां खुले, . . . (**व्यवधान**) . . . जिससे उसको सुविधा हो, यह देखते हैं। . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please frame the question now.

**श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह** : इसलिये मैं आपके माध्यम से पूछना चाहता हूं कि निश्चित रूप से आप यह बतायें कि जिन ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में दूर-संचार सुविधायें उपलब्ध कराई जायेंगी, यह आदेश जारी हो जायें, तो उसके कितने दिन के अन्दर वहां यह काम शुरू हो जायेगा?

**श्री सुख राम** : सभापति जी, जैसा कि अभी आपने जिक्र किया कि 20 या 21 हजार पंचायतों को अभी टेलीफोन की सुविधायें दी गई तो 90 हजार कैसे हुआ, यह 90 हजार हज एक ही वर्ष का नहीं है, यह पीछे से लेकर के जो हमने लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया था उसके मुताबिक है और अभी यह मैं मान सकता हूं कि इस वर्ष हमने जो 35 हजार का लक्ष्य रखा था उसमें थोड़ी कमी होगी, सामान उपलब्ध न होने की वजह से उसमें थोड़ी कमी होगी, मगर उसको मैं अगले वर्ष में पूरा करूंगा। जहां तक आपने अपने एरिया में टेलीफोन एक्सचेंज की बात कही है, आप मुझको उसे बतायेंगे, मैं देखूंगा उसको। . . . (**व्यवधान**) . . .

**श्री दिग्विजय सिंह** : कह तो दिया है आपको, अब क्या बतायेंगे?

**श्री सुख राम** : अभी जो आपने शिकायत की कि अधिकारी बात नहीं मानते . . . (**व्यवधान**) . . .

**श्री दिग्विजय सिंह** : 6 महीने हो गए

**श्री सुख राम** : तो माननीय सदस्यों को तो अधिकार प्राप्त है कि यहां बात उठायें और जो आप यहां बात उठायेंगे उसके बारे में छान-बीन करके आपक एक्सचेंज जहां होना है, उसमें जरूर हम तेजी लायेंगे, उसको पूरा करने की कोशिश करेंगे।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Almost every Member had raised his hand. It is impossible. Now, Dr. Naunihal Singh. Someone who has not asked any question so far. I think every Member had raised his hand. (*Interruptions*)

DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government would consider exempting the *gram* panchayats, in the rural areas, from the present fee of Rs. 500 levied in the case of PCOs? Secondly, is the Government considering installation of electronic exchanges in the rural areas?

SHRI SUKH RAM: This is our policy; to replace all the manual exchanges by the end of this year, by 31st of March, this year. All the manual exchanges in the country would be replaced. Then, gradually, we are replacing the electro-mechanical exchanges also. It will take some time. We have a plan to replace all the electro-mechanical exchanges with electronic exchanges. But it will take some time. It depends on resources also.

**श्री महेश्वर सिंह** : सर, मैंने सबसे पहले हाथ खड़ा किया था।

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can write to the Minister.

DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Sir, my first question in regard to exempting the *gram* panchayats from the fee of Rs. 500 has not been answered. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we should go to the next question. Question No. 282. (*Interruptions*) Do you want the whole time to be devoted to one question? Do you want the whole hour to be devoted to one question? (*Interruptions*)

**श्रीमती सत्या बहिन** : हाफ एन आवर डिस्कशन हो इस पर । . . . (व्यवधान) . . .

**श्री राम नरेश यादव** : आधे घंटे की चर्चा महानगर टेलीफोन निगम पर की जाए। . . . (व्यवधान) . . . पूरे सदन का उससे संबंध है और पूरे देश का भी है । . . . (व्यवधान) . . . इसलिए महोदय, इस पर आधे घंटे की चर्चा होनी चाहिए ।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the Minister willing to have a half-an-hour discussion? (*Interruptions*) We will have a half-an-hour discussion. Now, Question No. 282.

**Violation of provisions of FEFA by Banks**

*282. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:†

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA:

Will the Ministe of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Directorate of Enforcement has recently, issued notices to certain banks suspecting serious violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof stating the outcome of the enquiry if the same has been completed; and

(c) what action is contemplated by Government against the Chiefs of the concerned banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKARA MURTHY): (a) to (c) The Directorate of Enforcement has initiated enquiries with certain banks in the country for acertaining the violations of FERA. During the enquiries, the Directorate has come across instances of illegal remittance of foreign exchange equivalent of Rs. 77.93 crores (approx.) through VOSTRO accounts to Standard Chartered Bank, London, GIRO Bank PLC, UK, and Bank of Ireland, Dublin.

Appropriate action under the provisions of FERA will be taken on completion of the enquiries against the persons who violated FERA.

**श्री राम गोपाल यादव** : सभापति महोदय, माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने प्रश्न के उत्तर में यह स्वीकार किया है कि फेरा का वायलेशन करके 77.93 करोड़ रुपए मूल्य की विदेशी मुद्रा देश से बाहर भेजी गई है। यह एक गंभीर मसला है। लेकिन जहां दसों हजार करोड़ रुपए के सिक्योरिटी स्केम जैसा घपला हो तो संभवत: गवर्नमेंट के या मंत्रियों के मन में यह छोटा मामला है। इसलिए इसमें कोई प्रभावी कार्रवाई नहीं हो रही है, ऐसा मुझे प्रतीत होता है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि फेरा में वायलेशन कब से प्रारम्भ हुए, डायरेक्ट्रेट आफ इंफोर्समेंट को इसकी जानकारी कब हुई और कब इसकी इररेग्युलरिटिज को डिटेक्ट किया गया और इस अवधि में जो इंक्वायरी हुई तथा उसमें जो प्रगति हुई है उसमें कौन-कौन से प्रमुख बैंक अधिकारियों के नाम प्रकाश में आए हैं, कृपया सदन को बताने की कृपा करें?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MANMOHAN SINGH): Sir, according to our records, these transactions started sometime in Februay 1991. They were detected in October 1992. Since then the Enforcement

†The questions was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Ram Gopal Yadav.